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SOME CONTINENTAL PLAYS FOR AMATEURS

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One of the most tempting and worthy ambitions for club or college dramatic organizations is the presentation of great plays from the modern and contemporary Continental theater. There are many difficulties in finding a real choice of European plays, the prime one being the fact that so many themes characteristic of the Continental drama are unsuited to the use of amateurs—disagreeable problems of sex, or other over-realistic or lurid material which few amateur organizations care to attempt. There are many plays, of course, of no interest to American audiences, and many which would hardly be understandable. The lack of translations is a severe handicap, though this gap is being rapidly and well filled. Then, too, a great many plays require settings of a kind or of an elaboration beyond most amateur equipment.

There are, however, many great Continental plays, especially by the commanding playwrights, not unsuited by reason of their material to the demands of amateur production, of great interest to American audiences (not to the “high-brow” only), which are accessible in reasonably good translations, and which are not beyond adequate presentation by any upstanding club of fairly advanced amateurs. And, by the way, producing one of these plays under competent direction would make advanced amateurs out of all substantially concerned in the venture.

It is not contended that all of the plays listed below would be suitable for all clubs, but all of them are possible (many of them have been done successfully by amateur organizations), all of them are notably worthy of presentation, and few of them have had a professional (and not many an amateur) presentation in America. In short, the production of any fair number of the plays suggested would be a notable achievement for any theater—amateur or professional—and a notable contribution to the theater of any community in America.

A more complete reference and descriptive list of Continental plays is urgently needed. This is but a proposal toward a list of plays through which one could look with certainty of finding what best there is to serve the purpose. Yet one would do well to investigate these before spending much time searching elsewhere.

Nor is it contended that these plays are all easy, need no adapting and cutting, have no difficulties, etc. They demand good effort, of course. But they are all excellent "possibilities."

A very wide reading in dramatic literature would hardly qualify one to name offhand a dozen Continental dramas suitable for such work as we are considering, and the worth of this list—if it have any—is not more by way of suggestion than of saving time and effort which would have to be spent in general and undirected reading by those who can as little afford it as could the writer when he did the reading necessary to make even so brief a compilation.

The Good Hope. (*Op Hoop van Zegen.*) By HERMAN HEIJERMANS. Translated from the Dutch by HARRIET GAMPERT HIGGINS. *The Drama*, November, 1912. Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co. \$0.75.

A somber, powerful, and naturalistic tragedy of seafaring life that, played with restraint and utmost simplicity, could be made most effective by amateurs of some experience in interpretation. Two simple interior settings give an admirable chance for variation by lighting, etc. Ten male and eight female characters. The parts are well balanced and provide opportunities for a number of capable people.

A Scrap of Paper. By EDMUND SARDOU, adapted by J. P. SIMPSON. Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co. \$0.15.

Six male and six female characters, modern costumes, three fairly easy interior scenes. Time, about one and a half hours.

Sigurd Slembe. Part II. By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON. Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co. \$1.50.

A long play of elevated moral tone, full of intensely dramatic though restrained situations centering about the interest and power of tradition. Long, grave, and rather difficult. Four male, three female parts, one boy, servants, attendants, etc. Two castle interiors to be suggested.

The Journalists. By GUSTAV FREYTAG. *The Drama*, February, 1913. Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co. \$0.75.

Seventeen male and four female characters with some extra persons. Two simple interiors. A good play for rather advanced students.

Lucky Pehr. By AUGUST STRINDBERG. Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd Co.
\$1.50.

A poetic, symbolic play of varied action not unlike *Peter Pan* or *The Blue Bird* in general effect. Compared with them, however, it is easy to stage. The costuming is romantically picturesque and suggestive of remote time and place. One strong leading character, male or female, is needed; thirty or more minor characters.

The Bluffers. Adapted from the French (*Poudre aux yeux*) by R. M. GEORGE.
New York: French. \$0.25.

An effective and easy comedy in two acts and two interior scenes. Dialogue, good. Demands suggestion of the French atmosphere. Nine male and six female parts, well balanced.

El Gran Galeoto. By JOSE ECHEGARAY. Translated by HANNAH LYNCH. In the "Drama League Series of Plays." New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. (Other translations available.)

The well-known and powerful drama of modern Spain—one of the greatest of modern plays. While difficult, it is not beyond the ability of advanced amateurs who feel that the situation is possible for them to portray. Calls for six men and three women with all parts excellent. Staging not difficult—a study, a drawing-room, and a small room in an inn. Three acts and a prologue.

The Inspector General. (Revizor.) By NIKOLAS GOGOL. Translated by M. S. MANDELL for the Yale Dramatic Association and published by them.

A great farce-comedy of Russian life in five acts. Time, the early nineteenth century. Two scenes, easily arranged: a room in the house of the police prefect, and a small bedroom of an inn. Calls for nineteen men and five women, with other non-speaking parts. One especially able comedy actor needed.

Love and Geography. (*Geografi og Kjaerlighed.*) By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON.
Translated by EDWIN BJORKMAN. New York: Scribner.

A delightful and powerful comedy in three acts. One setting, a living-room, with changes stands throughout. Calls for three men and five women—parts well balanced. This play deserves to be much better known, especially to acting amateurs.

The Duel. By HENRI LAVEDAN. Translated by LOUIS N. PARKER. Sanger & Jordan, 1482 Broadway. Mins. Royalty.

Parts: six men, two women. Scenes: three interiors, not difficult.

The Prince D'Aurec. By HENRI LAVEDAN. Translated by BARRETT H. CLARK in *Three Modern Plays from the French.* New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$1.25.

This comedy in three acts is a masterpiece of modern French drama. Difficult, requiring good acting; presents some difficulties in staging which, as usual, can be adjusted. Some cutting advisable. Excellent for a club of

resources and experience. Parts: fifteen men, eight women. Scenes: three elaborate interiors which can be simplified.

The Lost Paradise. By LUDWIG FULDA. Adapted from the German by H. C. DEMILLE. New York: French. \$0.25. (Acting rights with publishers.)

A strong play, with dramatic situations arising from problems of relation between employer and employed. Parts: nine men, eight women. Three acts. Two interior scenes. Modern costume.

The Master Builder. Play in three acts. By H. IBSEN. Translated by E. GOSSE and W. ARCHER.

Four males, three females. Scenery, varied; costumes, modern. Plays a full evening. Free for performance. \$0.50.

The Pillars of Society. Play in four acts. By H. IBSEN. Translated by W. ARCHER.

Ten males, nine females. Scene, a single interior; costumes, modern. Plays a full evening. Free for both amateur and professional performance. One of Ibsen's most powerful plays and well adapted to advanced amateurs. Boston: W. H. Baker. \$0.25.

An Enemy of Society. Play in five acts. By H. IBSEN. Translated by W. ARCHER.

Nine males, two females. Scenes, all interiors; costumes, modern. Free for both amateur and professional performance. Plays a full evening. Very successfully done by college amateurs and, of course, a powerful play on a great theme. Boston: W. H. Baker. \$0.25.

Like Falling Leaves. (*Comme le Foglie.*) By GIUSEPPE GIACOSA. Translated by EDITH and ALLAN UPDEGRAFF. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. \$1.50.

Ranks, with *The Stronger*, among the greatest modern Italian plays. Demands good work, but effective for experienced amateurs. Four acts. Eight men, seven women, and some supers. Five big parts and some very effective minors. Has interest, power, and sentiment. Staging easy: an elaborate drawing-room opening into dining-room; a country-place living-room.

The Stronger. (*Il piu forte.*) By GIUSEPPE GIACOSA, 1905. Translated by EDITH and ALLAN UPDEGRAFF. New York: Mitchell Kennerley.

One of the greatest modern Italian plays; few Continental dramas more worth doing. Powerful and artistic. Three acts. Fourteen men (six unimportant), seven women. Has five big parts. Staging easy: a drawing-room, rich and elegant, stands through the three acts.

The Adventurer. By ALFRED CAPUS. Translated by BENEDICT PAPOT. *The Drama*, Chicago, November, 1914. \$0.75.

An easy comedy drama: setting, French; four acts; eight men, seven women. Acts well. Staged easily: an exterior (terrace), a parlor, a hallway. Exterior may be changed to interior. A brilliant play of great interest and power.

The House of Fouchambault. By EMILE AUGIER. Translated by BARRETT H. CLARK. New York: French. \$0.50.

A domestic drama by a great French dramatist. Rather advanced work needed. Though serious, it is a gripping comedy of manners. Parts: fifteen men, four women. Scenes: simple modern interiors.

Leonarda. By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON. Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co. \$0.75. "Everyman Series," \$0.35.

A serious, heavy play, requiring intelligence and skill, but with admirably balanced and good minor parts and a strong emotional lead. Parts: six men, six women. Scenes: easy interiors and an exterior easily played as an interior.

A Lesson in Marriage. By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON. New York: Dutton. "Everyman Series," \$0.50.

Excellent play of the type that serious amateurs should attempt. A serious comedy—Norwegian. Three men, four women. Some of the long speeches, for the play is old-fashioned, can be readily cut. Staged easily: two comfortable old-time sitting-rooms, similar.

The Bankrupt. By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON. Translated by R. F. SHARP. New York: Dutton. "Everyman Series," \$0.35.

A play in four acts; an excellent and dramatic play that should be better known. Parts: fifteen men, three women. Scenes: two easy interiors and one garden exterior that might be rearranged as an interior.

Lynggaard & Co. By HJALMAR BERGSTROM. Translated from the Danish by EDWIN BJORKMAN. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. "Modern Drama Series." \$1.50.

A drama in four acts. Strong play of modern social and business problems. Excellent parts, well balanced. Some cutting needed. Parts: six men, three women. Scene: one drawing-room, setting elaborate but not difficult. Direction demands paintings. Can be arranged. Well worth doing.

Cyrano de Bergerac. By EDMUND ROSTAND. Translated by GERTRUDE HALL. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. \$0.50.

A tragi-comedy in five acts, requiring one exceptionally capable actor, but not at all beyond advanced amateur work. Parts: twelve men, three women, soldiers, and others. Scenes: elaborate interiors, and exteriors that can be managed without much difficulty.

The Romancers. By EDMUND ROSTAND. Boston: W. H. Baker. \$0.25.

A charming and amusing romantic French comedy. Three acts. Five men, one woman. Easily acted, but costumes should be elaborate and staging should be adequate. A single garden scene including the garden wall. The more attendants, musicians, etc., the better. Costume of seventeenth or eighteenth century.

The Art of Being Bored. By EDOUARD PAILLERON. Translated by B. H. CLARK. New York: French. \$0.25.

An only fairly difficult comedy in French setting. Three acts. Eleven men, nine women. Good parts. Lines can be cut and adapted. Staging: an elaborate drawing-room and a conservatory. Well worth doing.

The Crows. By HENRI BECQUE. Translated by BENEDICT PAPOT. *The Drama*, February, 1912. Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co. \$0.75.

A serious satire with well-balanced parts, all calling for good acting. Parts: eleven men, six women. Scenes: one very elaborate interior and one plain interior; this contrast important.

The King. By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON. Translated by R. F. SHARP. New York: Dutton. "Everyman Series," \$0.35.

In four acts and a prologue. This is a remarkable play, subtle and requiring good work, and having one street scene demanding rather more staging than average amateurs can manage. But it is not beyond many clubs and would be a striking success. Parts: sixteen men, six women, ladies, gentlemen, dancers, farmers, etc. Scenes: A Gothic hall (not difficult), a room in a factory (easy), a park exterior, a town square (elaborate setting), an interior.

The Beaver Coat. By GERHART HAUPTMANN. Translated by LUDWIG LEWISOHN. Hauptmann's *Dramatic Works*. New York: Heusch. \$1.50.

A thieves' comedy in four acts and two settings—not difficult interiors. Brilliant naturalistic comedy; fine characterization; good acting play; a number of good parts and one unusually competent person needed to play the Falstaffian Mrs. Wolff. Nine men, four women.

The Trail of the Torch. By PAUL HERVIEU. Translated by J. A. HAUGHTON.

In the "Drama League Series." New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.

A brilliant drama in four acts; admirably constructed and characterized. A powerful story of mother-love, the heroine torn between the irreconcilable duties of the daughter and the mother. Three powerful female parts—one especially difficult—and three excellent male rôles, but not at all beyond adequate presentation by advanced amateurs. Two interiors and one exterior (could be played in three interiors). Seven men, eight women. One of the greatest of contemporary Continental plays and on a theme unusually adapted to amateur limitations.

The New System. By BJORNSTERNE BJORNSON. Translated by EDWIN BJORKMAN. New York: Scribner. \$1.50.

A drama of business, love, and politics, not unlike *The Enemy of the People* in material, though inferior in dramatic value. Four acts, four interiors (might be played in two sets) not very difficult to arrange. Admirably varied and strong parts. Good for advanced amateurs. Fourteen men and eleven women with a few extras.

Colleague Crampton. By GERHART HAUPTMANN. Translated by MORISON and HOUSE. *Dramatic Works*. New York: Heusch.

A delightful and keen comedy drama in five acts. In effect a serious discussion of the social aspects of the liquor problem; one of the most interesting of the writer's plays. Excellent parts requiring good acting for the leads, but not at all beyond advanced amateurs. Three interiors, not too difficult. Fourteen men, three women, and about twenty fairly competent extras.